

Jewish Charity Workers Discuss the Situation in Russia



DR. JACOB H. HOLLANDER, of Baltimore, leading speaker yesterday.



JEWISH CHARITIES CONFERENCE AT BETH AHABAH TEMPLE AT CLOSE OF MORNING SESSION YESTERDAY.



RABBI WISE, of New York, leading speaker yesterday.

CONSIDERING the late hour of the adjournment of the banquet and reception tendered to the visiting members of the National Conference of Jewish Charities, and the visitors who accompanied them, by the local community in the Jefferson Hotel on Monday night, the opening of yesterday's session in the Temple Beth Ahabah was unusually prompt and well attended. Though the rain was falling fast some time before the scheduled hour for the beginning of the afternoon meeting, the attendance, nevertheless, was but little smaller than in the morning.

The contrast of the festive and merriment of the night before with the day of work, touching one of the largest problems that confronts the members of the Jewish race today, in no wise dampened the ardor of the delegates. The conference got down to the serious work of the session as soon as the president's gavel called it to order, and the discussion was marked by earnestness and enthusiasm throughout. From the viewpoint of the several speakers it seemed but natural to forecast that the things accomplished by this convention toward the real aims of the organization will be greater than those of any of its predecessors.

Members reading the leading papers and making the principal speeches did not hesitate to show wherein charity, as practiced by the organization today, is inadequate, while they in turn reviewed the important problems of those discussing the various topics.

Jews in Russia. As the general topic of the morning session, Dr. David Blaustein, formerly superintendent of the Educational Alliance of New York City, read an abstract of the pamphlet "Jewish Charitable Activities in Russia," which had previously been distributed among the members of the conference. The paper was prepared by Dr. David Blaustein, Professor H. L. Sabsevel, Messrs. E. W. Lewin-H Epstein and Bernard Richards. The pamphlet deals exhaustively with the problem of the Jewish people in Russia, their unfortunate situation, and measures which the National Association of Jewish Charities has adopted and will in future take for its alleviation. In substance it is as follows:

"Early in the eighteenth century the Jewish community of Russia was organized into a 'Kahal.' They were registered and supplied with passports, so that they might go from place to place without the government losing track of their whereabouts or their identity. In the formation of the 'Kahal' the Russian government, in addition to this is the 'Korobka,' or meat tax, which is the main burden which falls on the great mass of the Jews who, of course, refuse to use anything but the kosher meat. This tax is exceedingly oppressive and unjust, and has weighed very heavily especially on large numbers of the poor.

"This tax was designed to cover a number of deficiencies of the government, among them the support of the communal institutions of the Jewish people, but to the latter purpose it has rarely been put. The amount of money above the grant, according to law, should go to the Minister of the Interior for the special use of the Jewish communities, but instead it has been used for alien purposes, such as the building of roads and even for the erection of Greek orthodox churches, as well as to increase the police force so that it might hound down the Jews who have not the right to live outside of the Jewish settlement, and expel them.

Need of Education. "One of the greatest needs of the Jewish people in Russia is that of education, not only among the poor people, but the middle class, since the doors of the governmental schools are practically closed to them. The most important educational agency in the empire is the Society for the Promotion of Education Among the Jews, which has been in existence since 1863, and has accomplished much.

"The income of this society is derived from its membership dues. Next to this is the promotion of industrial and agricultural education among the Jewish youth in Russia. In the Jewish Colonization Association has been a very potent factor, especially among the farmers in Southern Russia, who have been of great assistance in the case of crop failures and for the advancing of money for new farming machinery, seeds, etc. Since 1902 has been particularly active. Besides this, great aid has been derived from the various agencies of self-help and mutual aid organized among members of the race.

"The problems of relief are taken up by the members of the various charitable organizations which have sprung into existence in the stricken country and which are working earnestly and strenuously for the uplifting of the race. Many of the workers, men and women, by the extensiveness of their labors, are personally known alike to

man, woman and child, throughout large communities. They are taking upon themselves the support of a cause among their oppressed people which is almost beyond comprehension in America."

Report of President.

The report of the president, Mr. Nathan Bijur, touched in a general way the things accomplished by the association since the last session of the conference, and considering measures which should increase the efficiency of the organization.

Mr. Bijur referred to the prompt response of the association to the needs of the sufferers, both in San Francisco and Chelsea, Boston, who, however, on account of the excellent organization of charities in both places, did not need outside help. Nothing, however, could better have shown the spirit of the association. Though poverty and misery have been in plenty, he said, the period since the last conference has been much brighter than before, partly on account of the industrial revival and partly because the immigrants have gained a firmer foothold and withal, been less and less oppressed.

The philanthropic movement, therefore, though it has been gradual, has been none the less marked, which is well evidenced by the great strides in constructive charities made by the Jewish communities. Then were cited some of the most notable achievements of the race, such as the building of new charitable institutions, and the addition to the old.

Special attention, too, has been paid to the international charities which, as Russia and Morocco, command the attention of the Jewish people all over the world.

Since the opening of the present year, however, one of the gravest problems of the people is that of the unemployed. The channel of immigration which is open to the unemployed unmarried men of other nations, is closed to the Russian and Roumanian Jew. This has, of course, placed a heavy strain upon the association, but although the problem is now by no means solved, the future looks bright. With few words regarding the outlook of the society and the kindly reception it has been accorded in Richmond, the report for the fifth biennial session closed.

Unification of Activities.

All things considered, the most interesting address of the morning session was that of Dr. Jacob H. Hollander, of Johns Hopkins University, president of the Federation of Jewish Charities of Baltimore, on "The Unification of Jewish Communal Activities."

Bearing in mind that the term "down-town" and its correlative, said Professor Hollander, "possesses only historical significance, being in the main divested of whatever geographical and economic meaning may once have attached thereto, I maintain that the logical and rational development of communal Jewish activity is in the

direction of an arrest of further duplication of down-town no less than of up-town institutions, and the unification of all the charitable efforts of a community, wherever located or however constituted.

In Baltimore an appreciable step has been taken in the direction suggested by the formation within the past year of ten of the most active societies into the United Hebrew Charities. This movement has had the full sympathy and co-operation of the up-town federation, the Federated Jewish Charities. We have recognized that the ideal organization of Jewish charitable activity in Baltimore would be, and ultimately will be, the inclusion within the older organization, the Federated Jewish Charities, of all organized charitable effort, and the extension over the entire field of the principles already successfully established over a considerable part thereof.

Suggests New Organization.

Dr. Hollander suggested as a temporary expedient rather than as a final solution of the problem confronting the Jews in other cities the formation of a union among the down-town organizations, similar in scope and activity to the up-town organizations. He said the new organization is not to be a device whereby the support of its included institutions is to be shifted from one section of the community to another.

"The self-respecting members of the down-town community," he asserted, "have been the first to resent any such substitute as a denial of that historic right of the Jew to give according to his means, and to insist that the same warm humanity which has brought into existence and up to this point maintained, even though with much self-denial and heroic effort, the down-town institution, demands the right to maintain it. Any withdrawal of that right in whatever cause presented, is a perversion of charity, and, above all, of Jewish charity. It may very well be that specific elements may have failed to contribute as they might to the support of those institutions which their own neglect has permitted to come into being. But the remedy for this lies in added, not in substituted, giving."

If the suggested new organizations will introduce economies in the financing of the included bodies, prevent the formation of new and unnecessary institutions, raise the efficiency of those already in existence, Dr. Hollander said, a great forward move will have been taken toward the goal of complete federation. In the interim, he said, through the device of a joint standing committee, or perhaps even less formally through the medium of warm good will, cordial understanding and frequent conference, the two bodies can work into closer and closer affiliation. We live in stirring days, days in which the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the sun. If heritage of race and faith stand for anything, there be for us no more advance at equal pace, but leadership and primacy.

As to the Jews, they are chiefly to be aided when they first come to this country; later they generally become self-supporting. None of them, however, should be neglected, and though there are not enough of the sick and needy in one city or community to warrant its having a refuge for them, by the plan of international cooperation those people in two towns or several towns might all be cared for in the same institution. The plan has been tried and has proved eminently successful.

Rabbi Zepin then rapidly reviewed the classes who have drifted down, and are not likely to have unless this plan is put into practical operation.

For the children, the rabbi advocated a plan of taking them from the streets and putting them in healthful, moral surroundings among their own people, where they could be grounded not only in the fundamentals of education, but religion.

He advised the fraternal orders to take up the matter of international cooperation and use it to the advantage of their people, as it seems as though the idea had its origin with the fraternities.

Under this head, with relation to the order, B'nai B'rith, Mr. Jacob Furth, of St. Louis, spoke concerning the institutions maintained by that fraternity. Dr. Callisch read an excellent and comprehensive paper, "With Relation to the National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives," prepared by Mr. S. Grabfelder, of Philadelphia. On account of the address of Dr. Stephen S. Wise, which was moved up to yesterday afternoon instead of today, when it was scheduled, discussion of the subject of international cooperation was discontinued after a few words by Mr. Mark Gunst, of Richmond, and Judge Julius W. Mack, of Chicago, whose remarks were mostly suggestions supplementing the views of the speakers who had preceded them.

Address of Dr. Wise. Dr. Wise, who is rabbi of the Free Synagogue, of New York, and former Child Labor Commissioner in Oregon, said in the course of his address on "The Functions of the National Conference of Jewish Charities":

"The difficulty with most charity

conferences is not functional, but organic. My criticism of today is directed not against organized charity, but against disorganized charity; not against overorganization, but rather unorganized philanthropy. Jewish charity has this in common with general philanthropy throughout the land, namely, that it is ideal save in two respects, lacking in extensiveness and in intensiveness. Stated more simply, there should be more of it and what of it there is should be better done.

The higher charity must not be governed by the rule of an ancient philanthropist. The cause of him I knew not. I searched out. The work of charity must be done in person, not by representatives. We of the house of Israel hold that vicarious at-one-ment is no more possible between man and man than between man and God. The higher charity must not become hired charity. Charity is like the coupon of a railroad ticket—not good if detached. Charity work must not be so highly organized that every burden is thrown upon the shoulder of the expert.

"Check-book philanthropy, unsupported by personal service, is unavailing. Many men and women imagine that charity in these days can be conducted on the principle, we touch the golden button and you do the rest."

Charity organizations must not be characterized by self-perpetuating officialism. Charity organizations must be democratic. Little bosses in the places are as odious as big bosses in big places. Charity organizations are sometimes found to be close corporations in more senses than one. Directors of charity societies ought to learn the art of resignation.

Jewish Personality. "We ought not to lose our Jewish personality or individuality in our social work. Let us not accept as inevitable the mechanization of much that goes under the name of Jewish charity. Too often we accept our neighbor's shibboleths just as they are about to cast them off.

"Back of all curative treatment of poverty must be certain convictions, the courage of which we need to have. One of such convictions ought to be that poverty is not a crime. If poverty be a crime it is, save in exceptional cases, a social crime, the crime of society.

As for the homeless, and the cause of social progress, the Jew has no such scapegoat as intemperance to which to refer every social wrong. Instead of the much abused term, environment, let us in dealing with the causes of poverty and most forms of social evil, maintain the element of heredity, let us speak of overworked mothers and underpaid fathers.

"The higher charity of today is not so much in need of bank-notes as key-notes. Bank-notes will buy the homeless, but key-notes will give the homeless child a place in the home, but not a parentless child, who 'place it out' with strangers, with a foster mother, instead of placing it in the real mother. Such is our dread of anything savoring of socialism that we are in greater peril of drifting into anarchy than we are of drifting into socialism. If it be socialism for the state to 'place in' fatherless or deserted children with their mother, supporting her for a time in order to keep her family together, then I hold it is anarchy; that is in violation of every law of sanity and wisdom, to take children from their own mother and pay another

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"The higher charity of today is not so much in need of bank-notes as key-notes. Bank-notes will buy the homeless, but key-notes will give the homeless child a place in the home, but not a parentless child, who 'place it out' with strangers, with a foster mother, instead of placing it in the real mother. Such is our dread of anything savoring of socialism that we are in greater peril of drifting into anarchy than we are of drifting into socialism. If it be socialism for the state to 'place in' fatherless or deserted children with their mother, supporting her for a time in order to keep her family together, then I hold it is anarchy; that is in violation of every law of sanity and wisdom, to take children from their own mother and pay another

to rear them. Let us not accept as inevitable the mechanization of much that goes under the name of Jewish charity. Too often we accept our neighbor's shibboleths just as they are about to cast them off.

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